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THE TACTICAL AIR ASSAULT OF THE SOVIET GROUND FORCES.(U)

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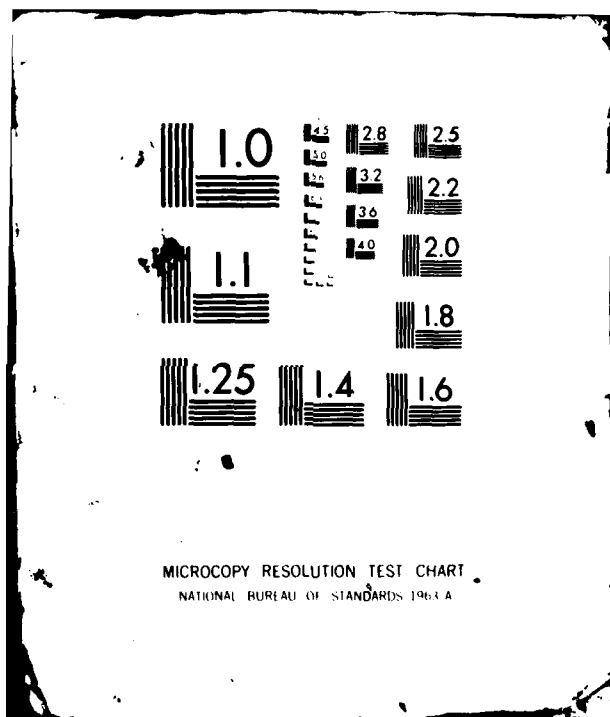
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STUDENT RESEARCH REPORT

THE TACTICAL AIR ASSAULT
OF THE SOVIET GROUND FORCES

1981
MAJ JOHN R. LOHMANN
GARMISCH, GERMANY

APO NEW YORK 09053

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THE TACTICAL AIR ASSAULT
OF THE SOVIET GROUND FORCES

Major John R. Lohmann

June 1981

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FOREWORD

This research project represents fulfillment of a student requirement for successful completion of the overseas phase of training of the Department of the Army's Foreign Area Officer Program (Russian).

Only unclassified sources are used in producing the research paper. The opinions, value judgements and conclusions expressed are those of the author and in no way reflect official policy of the United States Government, Department of Defense, Department of the Army, the US Army Intelligence and Security Command, or the Russian Institute. The completed paper is not to be reproduced in whole or in part without permission of the Commander, US Army Russian Institute, APO New York 09053.

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GEOFFREY H. Krieb
LTC, MI
Commanding



SUMMARY

The Soviet helicopter force has more than doubled in the past dozen years. Drawing on the experience of the US military in Vietnam and on the actions of helicopter units in the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, as well as extensive exercise activity, the Soviets have developed and refined an extensive tactical doctrine concerning helicopter employment on the modern battlefield. In this paper, the author examines how the Soviets intend to conduct an airmobile assault (a "tactical air assault") as a part of a larger offensive operation. In addition, reference is made to some steps which the Soviets see as necessary to combat what they consider to be a very real NATO helicopter threat.




TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
SUMMARY	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iii
INTRODUCTION	1
BACKGROUND: THE ACCEPTANCE OF AIRMOBILE OPERATIONS	3
AIRMOBILE MISSIONS	6
THE CONDUCT OF AIRMOBILE OPERATIONS	8
Training	8
The Airmobile Assault Unit	8
The Conduct of the Air Assault	10
DEFENSE AGAINST HELICOPTERS	17
APPENDIX A: Soviet Air Assault Training Facility	19
APPENDIX B: Soviet Anti-Helicopter Training Facility	20
FOOTNOTES	21
BIBLIOGRAPHY	25

INTRODUCTION

In his book, Europe Without Defense, Belgian General Robert Close describes the opening sequence of a possible Soviet/Warsaw Pact surprise attack on NATO with the Soviets using airborne units, airmobile assaults, and fifth column activities. Concerning the airmobile phase, he writes:

Initially dispersed and flying at low level to escape radar detection, the helicopters would cross the demarcation line at first light, i.e., about 0330 hours. At this precise moment, the iron curtain between the Elbe and the Main would be crossed by 450 helicopters or, on average, 3 helicopters for every 2 kilometers of frontier. At 0430 hours, all the NATO garrisons in depth would be attacked and the activities of the Soviet air force could start to counter adverse reaction and ensure air superiority...

The absence of antiaircraft defense positions in the garrisons of the NATO forces would enable the helicopters to land very close to the barracks and even -- when possible -- inside them. The guard posts would quickly be eliminated. Each member of the assault group would be fully aware of his specific task: to prevent the sortie of the troops, to ensure control of an ammunition depot, to occupy a guard post, to destroy major equipment, or, better still capture it. Under the conditions most favorable to the enemy, it can be expected that the whole garrison will be destroyed or neutralized. If unforeseen circumstances have upset the plan, there will be considerable time before the NATO units can regroup, eliminate their adversaries, and finally start their movement eastward to occupy advanced combat positions.

Every hour lost increases by the same amount the time available for the advance of the Soviet divisions in open terrain at a rate which can reasonably be estimated at 30 k.p.h.¹

Since 1967, the Soviet helicopter fleet has grown from 1,500 to over 3,400 aircraft. Of these 3,400 helicopters, almost 600 are heavily armed and armored MI-24 HIND gunships.² There was a fairly open debate in the Soviet military press in the late 1960's over the usefulness of heliborne operations on the modern-day battlefield. Since then, however, the Soviet Army leadership seems to have been reasonably well convinced

that airmobile operations can be significantly useful in modern combat operations, particularly in maintaining a high rate of advance on a battlefield pocketed with areas of chemical or nuclear contamination.

This paper will deal not with the one-time scenario envisioned by General Close but, rather, with a more routine airmobile assault conducted by a reinforced motorized rifle battalion, as it is described in the Soviet military press. An attempt will be made to portray the step-by-step training and employment of Soviet Army units in airmobile offensive operations as they would be conducted as a part of a Soviet advance. In addition, an overview will be made of some of the preparations being made in the Soviet Army to combat helicopters and heliborne assaults which might be employed by the West.

BACKGROUND: THE ACCEPTANCE OF AIRMOBILE OPERATIONS

The Soviet High Command began to give serious thought to the use of airmobile operations sometime in the mid-60's, shortly after the removal from power of Nikita Khrushchev. Until that time, although various types of helicopters were being developed and were present in Soviet inventories in limited numbers, they almost always were relegated secondary or less-than-significant support roles. The general concept of modern war shifted after Khrushchev's departure. No longer was total reliance placed on the Strategic Rocket Forces; now the contemporary battlefield was seen as one on which the Ground Forces would be significant -- decisive -- in achieving victory. The Program of the CPSU on the Defense of the Socialist Fatherland stated:

In nuclear war, the combat activities of the troops will inevitably be distinguished by great activity, swiftness, and exceptionally high maneuver ability, for only in such conditions will the results of their own nuclear strikes be used in full measure on one hand; on the other, the carrying out of similar strikes by the enemy will be made difficult. Armies will widely use all mobile means of fighting: tanks, armored transport, airplanes, helicopters, and others. (emphasis added)

The on-the-ground experience gained in Vietnam was extremely useful in the development of American airmobile tactics. The give-and-take of opinions which appeared in numerous US military journals helped to refine the theory of how to conduct operations using ground units transported by helicopters. The exchange of opinions was duly noted by Soviet analysts but without the benefit of actual combat experience. During the late 1960's, as the number of helicopters in the Soviet inventory slowly began to increase, articles concerning helicopter employment also

began to appear in the Soviet military press; however, these were based almost exclusively on "foreign reports." The debate concerning the usefulness of helicopters soon found its way into print. There, the main argument against their use was their vulnerability to predicted high concentrations of air defense systems on the open, rolling plains of Europe. Detractors pronounced that, while the jungles of Vietnam may have provided a suitable environment for helicopters, the openness of Europe would prove to be much too hostile.

The debate continued until late 1973, when two events occurred which were significant in the development of Soviet helicopter tactics. The first was the publication of a series of three articles dealing with airmobile operations in the Ministry of Defense newspaper, Krasnaya Zvezda in August of that year.⁴ They were written by Col. (now General-Major) M. I. Belov, a professor, Doctor of Military Science, and leading advocate of airmobile operations. In the articles, Belov reviewed the Western experience with helicopter operations and presented what he saw as the significant advantages to be gained on the contemporary battlefield through the use of helicopters. Taken separately, they only seemed to be a continuation of the helicopter debate. However, given their placement on page 1 of the official MOD newspaper for three successive weeks, they seemed to indicate that an official position had been taken. The tone of other articles which subsequently appeared in the Soviet military press seemed to indicate that helicopters would definitely be used in future military actions. This served to reinforce the belief that the concept of airmobile operations had been accepted at MOD-level by mid-1973.

The other event which impacted on Soviet airmobile tactics was the 1973 Arab-Israeli War. Up to that time, writings about airmobile operations were based on American and other Western experience. Beginning in early 1974, articles began to appear in Soviet military journals about Soviet airmobile exercises which employed tactics derived from "the experience of the Middle East War in 1973." Attention was paid to the October '73 War's lessons in the field of helicopter employment, and particularly to the effectiveness of the helicopter in an anti-tank role. Previously, the tank had been seen as dominating the European battlefield. With the appearance of the HIND-series of helicopter gunships in the forward area in the mid-1970's, more frequent references to tank-helicopter duels and the high survivability of helicopters against tanks in the October War and subsequent exercises began to appear.⁵

By the end of the 1970's, airmobile operations were well integrated into the tactics of the Soviet Army, and helicopter assets were in significant numbers in the Soviet inventory. Airmobile assaults are now viewed in the Soviet Russian and English-language⁶ military journals as a central means for continuing the forward movement of the main body of troops in an offensive.

At this point, a closer examination will be presented of the missions which will be given to the commander of a Soviet airmobile assault, the troops he will use, and how he will conduct his mission, as well as how he will defend against the "enemy's" use of helicopters while he operates on the ground.

AIRMOBILE MISSIONS

There seems to be at least a reasonable amount of agreement among Soviet authors concerning the uses which could be made of airmobile forces during an offensive. In almost every article which describes the conduct of "tactical airborne landings," the airmobile assault is conducted in the shallow rear of the enemy's engaged front-line forces. The missions of the airmobile forces will be conducted in "close cooperation" with the main forces advancing from the front. The missions which could be assigned to the commander of an airmobile assault force include:

- seizing and holding favorable lines in the enemy's rear in order to delay and/or destroy enemy reserve forces
- seizing and holding bridges and water crossing sites to insure the rapid, unobstructed crossing of the advancing main force units
- destroying nuclear delivery means and/or related equipment within the tactical zone of operations
- destroying enemy command and control points and rear area logistics installations
- seizing and holding road crossings, defiles, and passes critical to movement in restricted terrain
- along the coast, capturing and holding lines or bridgeheads to insure the landing of additional, amphibious forces, and the advance of friendly forces along or onto the coast.

The most frequently described airmobile operations involve the first and second of the above missions, with the seizure of a water crossing usually the unit's primary mission and the destruction of the enemy reserves the follow-on assignment. Other than the tailoring of the unit with additional equipment and forces, the conduct of most of the operations should follow the same basic pattern, from the training for the

actual air movement, to the movement to the loading zone, to the actual air movement and, finally, the landing in zones near the objectives. Only after the troops are on the ground again would the various missions and objectives significantly differ. .

There is less than total agreement among Soviet military authors concerning the distance behind the enemy's front line to which airmobile units will be sent. Belov mentions that "the zone of landing from helicopters is limited in the main to a tactical depth of the enemy defense up to 100 km."⁸ (emphasis added) This seems to be a comfortable forward limit for helicopter operations, but only very large (almost division-sized) or very small (raid-type) airmobile operations would be likely at that depth. Operations for battalion-sized airmobile assaults would probably take place up to 25 km. in the enemy rear. The advancing main force would then be able to provide covering fires for the assault as it was being carried out, or soon thereafter.

THE CONDUCT OF AIRMOBILE OPERATIONS

Training

A. A. Siderenko mentioned, in his 1970 book The Offensive, the value of airmobile operations in that "the air landing method does not require long special training of personnel, in comparison with the parachute landing method."¹⁰ A year later, an entire installation, prepared solely for training units in the conduct of airmobile operations, as well as the course of instruction for airmobile assaults, was described in Voyenny Vestnik (see Appendix A): The course of instruction consisted of "8-10 hours of training time."¹¹ That a vast new pool of manpower could be made available for air delivery into the enemy rear was discussed by the Chief of Soviet Airborne Troops Army General V. F. Margelov in a book, Bridgehead From the Clouds, in 1972:

But perhaps the main distinction of the helicopter landing is that personnel who have been trained for just a few hours can be used in it. Thus marines, combat engineers, mortarmen, and motorized riflemen, that is representatives of the various arms of troops, can be readily moved to the enemy rear¹² using helicopters and begin active combat operations there.

The Airmobile Assault Unit

Tactical Airborne Landings...are designated for the accomplishment of important combat missions. Their composition in each specific instance depends on the character of the expected actions, the depth of the landing, the speed of advance of the troops, the degree of suppression of the forces and firepower of the enemy, the number and type of assigned helicopters, etc.

Usually, for a (tactical airborne landing)¹³, a reinforced motorized rifle battalion is designated.

Although units ranging in size from a reinforced rifle platoon¹⁴ to "airmobile armoured divisions"¹⁵ are described in articles dealing with the theory of helicopter employment, the unit (podrazdeleniye) discussed whenever actual exercises are described is, as cited above, the reinforced motorized rifle battalion.¹⁶ A motorized rifle battalion has a complement of approximately 450 officers and enlisted men, armed with individual and crew served weapons, and is organized into three companies, a 120 m.m. mortar battery, and an AT platoon. Thus manned and equipped, the battalion serves as a convenient building block for a tailored unit which will "have to operate independently for several hours before (it) meet(s) up with the main force coming from the front."¹⁷

Particular attention needs to be given to the number and types of specialized units which will be attached to the basic maneuver element. Margelov points this out in his book:

If the enemy has been evaluated correctly, the weapons taken along will help the landing perform its mission and win. If not, confusion is not far off. 'Tanks!' the observer will shout. But it turns out that there is nothing to greet them with because someone mistakenly decided that the terrain was impassable for tanks, and all antitank weapons stayed behind...It is not necessary to take every kind of weapon along (just to load the aircraft), but only a precisely and strictly determined number...Those which will be most universal in the situation that has taken shape and, while increasing firepower, will not negatively affect mobility.¹⁸

Among the types of specialized units and personnel which have been most frequently discussed in the Soviet military journals as being attached for an airmobile assault are: ATGM battery¹⁹ and a mortar battery²⁰ (both attached to a motorized rifle battalion in an airmobile assault exercise in October 1974), combat engineers (sappers)²¹ and NBC recon personnel.²² To insure communications with the aviation unit providing close air support and with the artillery units in the lead elements of the advancing forces,

representatives of each of these air and artillery units are attached to the unit making the tactical air landing.²³

The Conduct of the Air Assault

The conduct of a "tactical air landing," an airmobile assault, begins when a senior commander (division commander or higher) of a given sector of the front determines that an air assault into the enemy rear is necessary in order to weaken the enemy and to insure the uninterrupted forward movement of his main body of troops. At that time, the senior commander designates the unit which will conduct the operation -- usually from his second echelon²⁴ -- and issues his order to the commander of the unit. At the same time he provides for the necessary ground and air support, the attachment of units and personnel for the conduct of the mission, and current intelligence information,²⁵ maps, and aerial photos²⁶ of the enemy and terrain in the area of the objective.²⁷

Once the ground unit,²⁸ probably a motorized rifle battalion, has been alerted for an airmobile operation, and its commander has been given his operations order by the senior commander, the battalion commander begins the planning process which will lead up to and through the air movement and the accomplishment of the mission on the ground.²⁹ Making use of the most recent intelligence information, he attempts to clarify his specific mission and make an estimate of the situation on the ground, both of the enemy and of the terrain. At this time, he tries to anticipate the probable courses of action of the enemy and to develop a general concept of operations, both for his immediate mission and for any subsequent missions he may also have been given. Ideally, he can conduct this analysis and estimate of the situation with his chief of staff but, more often than not, his principal assistant remains with the unit.

At the earliest possible opportunity the ground force commander issues his order for the unit to move to an assembly area and to be prepared to conduct an airmobile assault on a specific objective. Although the assembly area may be as far as 60-80 km. from the front line, as Col. Belov states in one article,³⁰ the description of the departure area by Col. Chernyshov appears to be the most probable one.

The distance of the airborne force's departure area from the forward edge is determined by the situation and in the first place by the terrain conditions. This distance must ensure that the airborne force stays in the air for the shortest possible time. However, the departure area should be located far enough from the forward edge for the helicopters to land unobserved and avoid₃₁ being destroyed by artillery fire or tactical missiles.

In the assembly (waiting) area, preferably a wooded area with sufficient vegetation to provide concealment from enemy air and ground reconnaissance, the companies disperse and establish all-around security. The commander also arranges for area air-defense by attached air-defense unit(s) or by the air defense units assigned to the senior commander in the local region. While providing all-around ground- and air-security, the companies also receive instructions from the chief of staff on reconnaissance and basic combat operations to be conducted upon landing, as well as in methods of defense against NBC weapons.

Preparations for the operation are conducted under the supervision of the chief of staff. Meanwhile, the battalion commander continues his coordination with the Air Force units which will provide close air support to the operation, and with the artillery units which will be supporting him from the advancing forces. Finally, and most importantly, he will meet with the commander (or the commander's representative) of the helicopter unit which will transport his unit. Depending on the

number and types of attached units, the battalion may require up to a helicopter regiment, with 16 MI-6 HOOK Heavy-Lift helicopters and 39 MI-8 HIP Troop Transport helicopters, for the move.³²

At the same time that the MR Bn CO is conducting his preparations, the helicopter unit CO is also going through his planning cycle. He, too, must make his coordination with the air and artillery units which will be firing into the area of operations, particularly with those units which will be firing in support of the airmobile operation. Both air and artillery will be used to suppress air defenses along the flight path; therefore, routes, schedules, and checkpoints need to be carefully planned in advance. In addition, both air and artillery will be used for preparatory fires on LZ's and objectives, and to block the approach of any enemy reserves. Most important from the point of view of the organization of the ground operation is the absolutely necessary coordination which takes place between the commanders of the ground force and helicopter units. The helicopter unit commander designates and, with the ground commander, makes a personal reconnaissance of the actual departure (pickup) zones. Together they will arrange for the air defense of the pickup zones, the disposition of the helicopters for the loading of equipment and the boarding of personnel, and the actual assignment of men and materiel to specific aircraft. These assignments will be based on the ground force commander's concept of operations, attempting at all times to maintain unit integrity.

The MR Bn CO, having completed at least the initial coordination with the units which will be supporting him, returns to the assembly area where he collects his subordinate unit commanders and moves with them to recon the route to the pickup zones and dispersal areas on the fringes

of the loading zones (under cover whenever possible). In the dispersal area, using aerial photos, large-scale maps, and terrain models of the area of operations, he issues his operations order for the air movement and the conduct of the ground mission.

The operations order normally includes a brief overview of the enemy situation, the mission of the airmobile force, the mission of the senior commander, and the support which he will provide. Following this information, the order lists the dispersal area around the loading/pickup zone for each subordinate and attached unit, the tail numbers on the helicopters assigned to each unit, primary and alternate landing zones, and the objective(s) of each of the units and their role in the overall maneuver plan. Next, the movement to the pickup zones is outlined, along with any other necessary coordinating and signal instructions. The last point covered is usually the time at which the airmobile force must be finally prepared to board the aircraft.

Once the subordinate unit commanders have had an opportunity to issue their orders to their personnel, the force moves to the nearby pickup zone in order to arrive simultaneously with the helicopter unit. The ground units disperse in their assigned areas and establish ground and air security. If necessary, and if time is available, the ground force units, with the assistance of the air crews, carry out practice drills in loading and unloading men and equipment, assembling units, and moving into combat formation following the planned landing. In order to minimize the possibility of detection, the time spent in preparation should exceed no more than "several hours" for a reinforced battalion's move.

After the ground force is reported prepared to board the helicopters, the aviation unit commander assumes overall command of the movement phase of the operation. Again under the supervision of the air crews, the equipment is loaded on the aircraft, secured and checked. When the equipment is loaded, the personnel will board the helicopters, pairing those individuals making their first airmobile assault with those who have experience in helicopter moves, if possible. The last persons to board before the respective unit leaders, who will perform final checks with the air crews, will be the air defense personnel with hand-held weapons such as SA-7's. Heavier, mounted, air defense weapons will have been loaded earlier with the other large equipment.

The helicopter unit commander, in planning for and in the conduct of the flight, determines the order of takeoff and assembly of the helicopters, their formation, routes, speed and conditions of flight, ensures the passing of check points according to schedule, and the accurate delivery of the ground force.

The commanders of the ground force and the helicopter unit ride together in one of the first helicopters in the formation: MI-8 troop-carrier helicopters in the lead, followed by MI-6 heavy-transport helicopters, which carry the heavy equipment and combat vehicles of the ground assault force. Nap-of-the-earth, minimum-altitude flying is the rule as the formation moves from friendly territory, over the forward line of troops, and into enemy-controlled airspace. Flights of fighter-bombers may lead the formation and suppress enemy air defense fire along the route. Helicopter gunships, which have either flanked the air column from the time of lift-off or have jointed it en route, also provide suppressing fire after the line of contact has been breached.

Security of the formation from attack by enemy aircraft, either rotary- or fixed-wing, is provided in one of three ways over enemy territory. Fighter aircraft can provide overhead protection when they are available and when air superiority is strongly contested by the enemy. Supporting gunships and the on-board machineguns of the troop and transport helicopters provide a second means of protection from the air enemy. The last protection from an air attack is by the same method used by regular troops operating on the ground, i.e., using individual weapons. Designated prior to boarding the helicopters, individual soldiers are assigned as air-defense gunners, covering a specific sector from a specific door or firing port on the helicopter. Soviet sources indicate that "if a helicopter with a landing force aboard has perfectly organized small-arms fire, it can destroy air targets at a distance up to 1,500-2,000 m. in a vertical target sector of 45-60°. In the horizontal plane the only dead space is the aft hemisphere. But this inconvenience can be avoided by helicopters flying snaking manoeuvres."³³ In addition to "flying snaking manoeuvres" to avoid an air attack from the rear, the air unit commander makes it a point never to fly directly from the pickup zones to the landing zones, in order to confuse any enemy who may observe the flight of the formation about the final objective of the airmobile force.

Landing zones, primary and alternate, are chosen by the two commanders, taking into consideration terrain (at least one terrain feature or heavy vegetation will obscure the LZ's from observation from the objective), the mission of the assault force, and probable enemy courses of action. Prior to the arrival of the lead elements of the column, the LZ, as well as the surrounding area, has been "softened" by air and/or

artillery strikes. If the terrain itself is too heavily overgrown to permit helicopters to land to unload equipment, a special high explosive bomb can be used which, according to then-Colonel Belov, "clears out a ground area of nearly a hectare, (about 2 1/2 acres) enough for landing seven helicopters."³⁴ If it is not necessary to unload equipment, the assault force can either jump or rappel from hovering aircraft.

The landing itself will be conducted in two stages, the first by an advance party which will secure the area for the main body, which will follow in the second stage as soon as the commander is given the "all-clear" by the advance party.

The main body will unload in the reverse order from that in which it loaded, the first off being the air-defense personnel with hand-held weapons. They will set up an air-defense screen for the helicopters when they are most vulnerable. The speed of unloading is critical in maintaining any degree of surprise for the operation. Ten to fifteen minutes is considered the maximum time permissible for a unit to unload its personnel and equipment, form into units, and begin movement to the objectives. The actual movement will depend on unit size, objective, and time available. It may be along single or multiple routes. The actions which take place following the landing will take the form of regular ground maneuvers and will be different from standard operations only insofar as they are independent of main force elements and some equipment may have been left behind in the interests of mobility by air. This marks the completion of the airmobile assault as such and the beginning, once again, of ground operations.

DEFENSE AGAINST HELICOPTERS

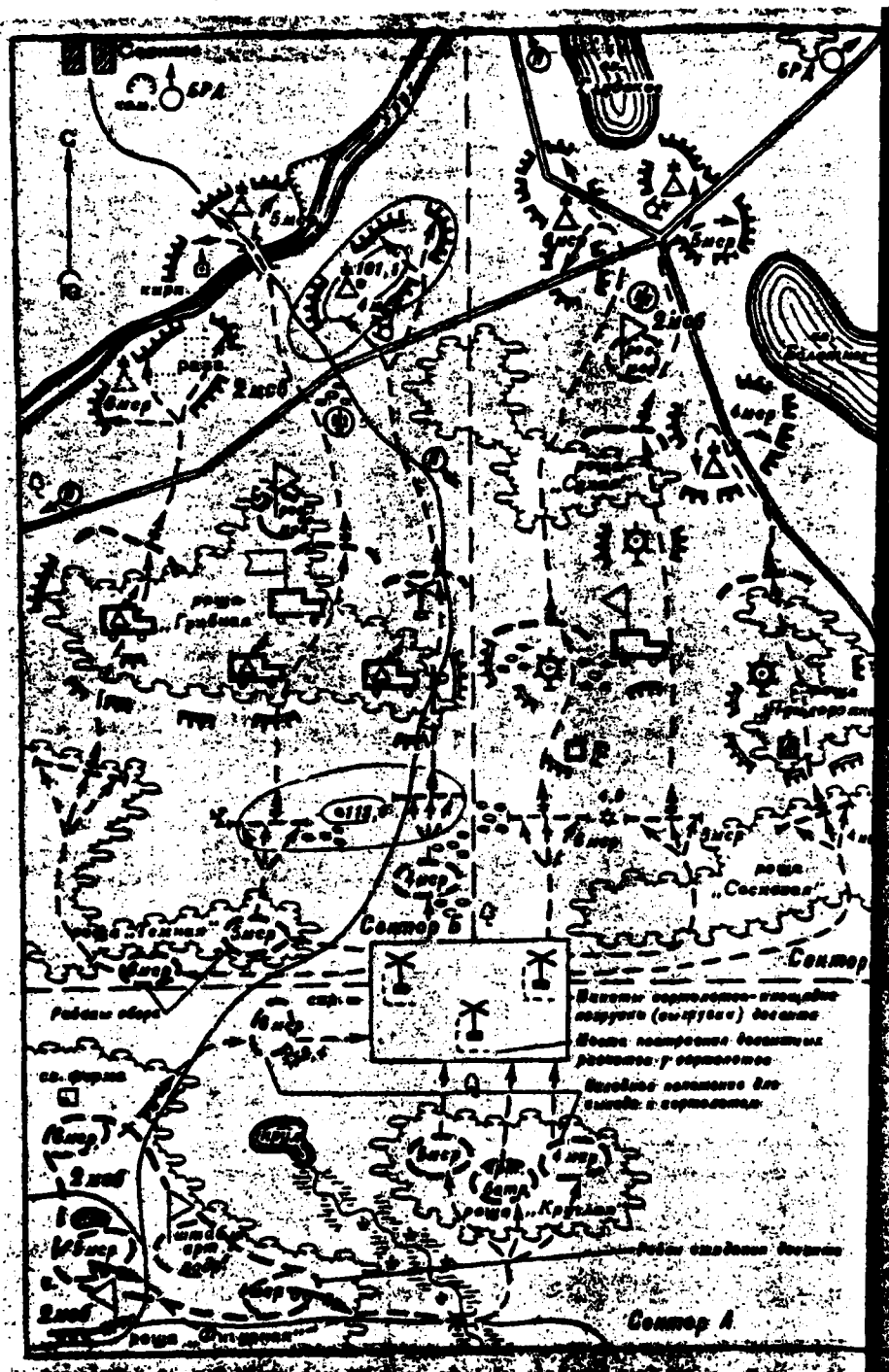
The Soviets appreciate the threat posed to their forces by the helicopter assets of the West, particularly by NATO helicopter gunships. However, their concern seems to center more on the threat that gunships would pose to their own airborne and airmobile forces operating independently, in the enemy's rear. There, presumably, the enemy would exercise some degree of air superiority. By 1974, the Soviets had already built and were using a facility specifically designed for anti-helicopter defense classes (see Appendix B). There, not only air defense units, but tank, motorized rifle, and artillery units have special facilities and training areas. Models of both airplanes and helicopters are displayed, along with their technical data and armament, and classes and exercises conducted on identifying and destroying "enemy" aircraft.

The classes and guidance provided for combating helicopters, at least from a very limited review of Soviet journals, differ little from basic air defense instruction. Small unit commanders are reminded to keep constant 360° air observation, particularly of low altitudes, to reduce the threat of helicopters flying "nap-of-the-earth." Special attention is called to "helicopter-threatened directions, maximum advancement of the radar barrier toward the enemy, and locating antiaircraft units as close to, even within, the combat formations they are assigned to protect."³⁵

Advance warning of low flying helicopters is, according to the Soviets, minimal. For this reason, emphasis is constantly placed on passive security measures, i.e., camouflage and "thorough visual

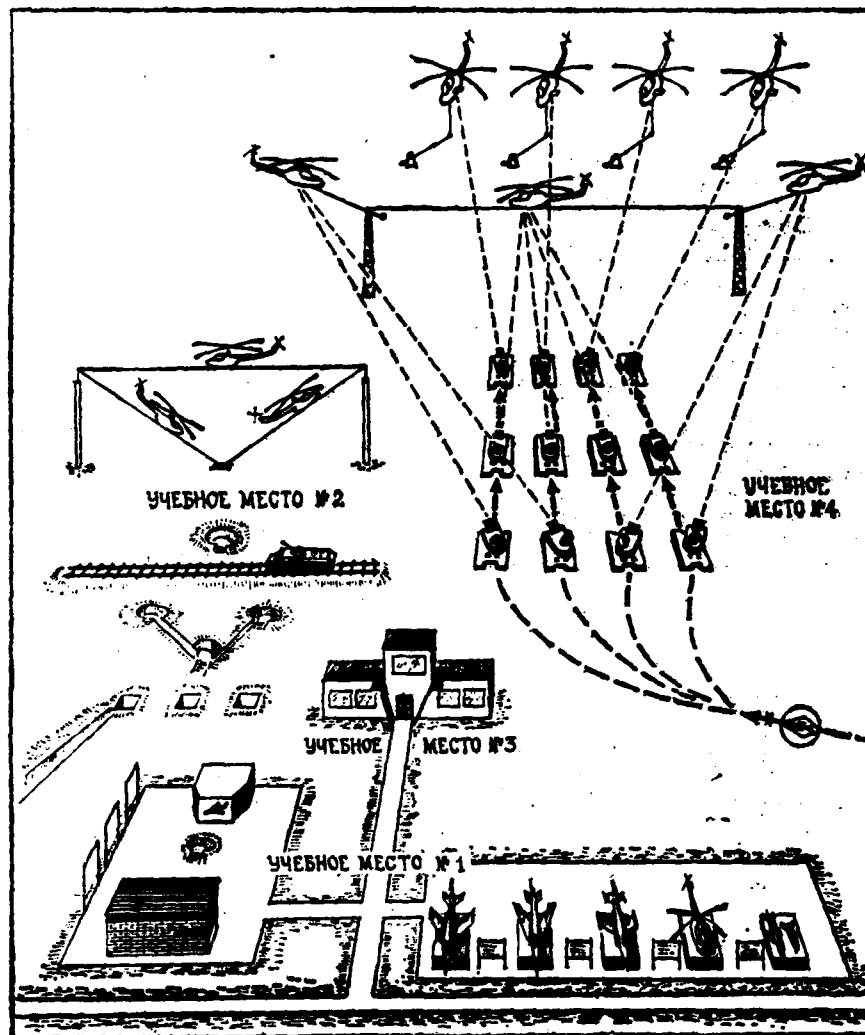
reconnaissance."³⁶ Once low-flying aerial targets are identified, there is little or no time to call the supporting air-defense unit. As a result, it is necessary to rely quite heavily on the assigned weapons within the unit, "including even rifles."³⁷ To stress the importance of these weapons, formal classes entitled "The Employment of the Assigned Weapons of the Company and Battalion for the Destruction of Low-Flying Targets," are given to officers. In articles dealing with anti-helicopter combat, the authors continually refer to the heavy reliance which must be placed on the basic weapons of the individual soldiers to put up a "wall of steel" immediately upon sighting approaching enemy helicopters.

This is not to say that the only way the Soviets see to combat helicopters is with assigned small arms. On the contrary, citing examples from the 1973 combat operations in the Middle East and other exercises, Col. Belov states that the helicopters' tactical possibilities have grown considerably, not the least among them being as a weapon against other helicopters. Indeed, "like tank battles of the past wars, a future war between well equipped armies is bound to involve helicopter battles."³⁸ Given the rate at which new HIND-D helicopter gunships are making their appearance in Eastern Europe, it is not unlikely that the Soviet Army overall, and not just now-Gen.-Maj. Belov, is preparing for just such an eventuality.



APPENDIX A: Soviet Air Assault Training Facility

Source: Urtaev, K., COL. "Battalion in an Air Assault," Voyennyy Vestnik, No. 3 (1971), p. 22.



42

APPENDIX B: Soviet Anti-Helicopter Training Facility

Source: Malkov, I., COL. "Combat With An Air Enemy," Voyennyy Vestnik, No. 8 (1974), p. 42.

FOOTNOTES

¹Robert Close, General, Belgian Army, Europe Without Defense? (New York: Pergamon Press, 1979), p. 182.

²The International Institute for Strategic Studies, The Military Balance, 1967-1968 (London: The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1967), p. 9. The Military Balance, 1979-1980 (London: The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1979), p. 11.

³K. S. Bochkarev, Gen.-Maj., et al., "The Modern Revolution in Military Affairs and Its Meaning," quoted in William R. Kintner and Harriet Fast Scott, ed. and trans., The Nuclear Revolution in Soviet Military Affairs (Norman, Oklahoma: Univ. of Ok. Press, 1968), p. 131.

⁴The publication of such a series of articles in Krasnaya Zvezda is, in the opinion of Col. William Scott, USAF, Ret., analyst of Soviet military affairs and former US Air Attache to Moscow, an indication of an official Ministry of Defense position. The shift in the tone of articles critical of airmobile operations subsequent to the appearance of this series gives weight to that opinion.

⁵See Yu. Zakarov, Col., "Remember Helicopters, Too," Voyennyy Vestnik, Aug. 1977, p. 64; M. Belov, Col., "Helicopters and Land Force Tactics," Soviet Military Review, Dec. 1976, p. 23.

⁶This author is inclined to disagree with those analysts who see Soviet English-language military journals, eg. Soviet Military Review, as vehicles for disinformation. The same authors write for Voyennyy Vestnik as write for Soviet Military Review, a perfect example being Gen.-Maj. Belov. They write the same, or very similar, things in both journals and, although not useful as a sole source of data, English-language journals are useful to see what the Soviets are telling their English-speaking friends, eg. the Indians.

⁷M. Tychkov, LTC, "Battalion in a Tactical Air Assault," Voyennyy Vestnik, July 1973, p. 42; unsigned, "Tactical Air Assaults," Voyennyy Vestnik, April 1978, p. 35; Yu. Chernyshov, "A Tactical Airborne Landing," Soviet Military Review, May 1980, p. 27; K. Urtaev, Col., "Battalion in an Air Assault," Voyennyy Vestnik, March 1971, p. 20.

⁸Belov, "Air Landing Forces," Soviet Military Review, Jan. 1979, p. 23.

⁹V. Chernyak, Maj., "Battalion in an Air Assault," Voyennyy Vestnik, June 1968, p. 23; "Tactical Air Assaults," Voyennyy Vestnik, Sept. 1976, p. 116, Dynin, "Tactical Air Assault," p. 36; V. Zhitarenko, "Combat Study of the Army and Navy," Krasnaya Zvezda, 9 Aug. 1979, p. 1.

¹⁰A. A. Siderenko, The Offensive (Moscow, 1970), translated and published by the USAF in "Soviet Military Thought Series," No. 1, p. 102.

¹¹Urtaev, "Battalion in an Air Assault," pp. 20-25. See also V. Zaystev, LTC, and A. Naumov, CPT, "ATGM Battery in a Tactical Air Assault," Voyennyy Vestnik, Feb. 1977, pp. 76-79, for classes given.

¹²V. F. Margelov, et al., Bridgehead from the Clouds (Moscow, 1972), quoted in Graham H. Turbiville, "A Soviet View of Heliborne Assault Operations," Military Review, October 1975, p. 6.

¹³S. Goryachkin, Col., "Communications in a Tactical Air Assault," Voyennyy Vestnik, Dec. 1974, p. 103.

¹⁴Z. Moseyev, Col., "The Assault in Helicopters," Znamenosets, May 1979, p. 28.

¹⁵Belov, "Helicopters Used by Ground Troops," Soviet Military Review, April 1976, p. 30.

¹⁶Dynin, "Tactical Air Assault," p. 36; Urtaev, "Battalion in an Assault," p. 20; Zhitarenko, "Combat Study," p. 1.

¹⁷Chernyshov, "Tactical Airborne Landing," p. 27.

¹⁸Margelov, quoted in Turbiville, "Heliborne Assault," p. 7.

¹⁹Zaytsev and Naumov, "ATGM Battery," pp. 76-79.

²⁰Zaytsev, "Mortar Battery in a Tactical Air Assault," Voyennyy Vestnik, December 1974, p. 93.

²¹Tychkov, "Tactical Airborne Landing," p. 27, and Urtaev, "Battalion in an Air Assault," p. 20.

²²Tychkov, "Battalion in a Tactical Air Assault," p. 43, and Urtaev, "Battalion in an Air Assault," p. 20.

²³Tychkov, Ibid., p. 42, and Goryachkin, "Communications," p. 107. FO's as well as communications personnel can be attached from artillery units. See Chernyak, "Battalion in an Air Assault," p. 21. Communications throughout the conduct of an airmobile assault, to include among the ground force units and between the ground force and the supporting helicopter and fighter units are described in detail in the Goryachkin article.

²⁴Unsigned article, "Tactical Air Assaults," p. 116, Zhitarenko, "Combat Study," p. 1.

²⁵Chernyshov, "Tactical Airborne Landing," p. 27, and Tychkov, "Battalion in a Tactical Air Assault," p. 44.

²⁶Tychkov, Ibid.

27 Urtaev, "Battalion in an Air Assault," p. 23.

28 In this case, "unit" is intended in its general, American military meaning, not as a translation of the Russian "chast", which may have a regimental-size meaning. Here "unit" refers to a battalion.

29 The sequence of events which make up an airmobile assault is a composite formed from a number of articles. Many points, such as the coordination between the ground force commander and the helicopter unit commander, appear repeatedly. Others may only be mentioned in one article. The events detailed in this section are those which, in the opinion of the author, could be expected to take place under conditions of sufficient time and with proper support, i.e., ideal conditions, rarely encountered on the battlefield. The articles used primarily to prepare this section are:

Belov, "Air Landing Forces," pp. 22-23.

Chernyshov, "A Tactical Airborne Landing," pp. 27-29.

Chernyak, "Battalion in an Air Assault," pp. 21-24.

Dynin, "Tactical Air Assault," pp. 25-29.

V. Subbotin, Col., "Air Defence of a Tactical Air Landing Force," Soviet Military Review, May, 1977, pp. 22-23.

Tychkov, "Battalion in a Tactical Air Assault," pp. 42-46.

Unsigned article, "Tactical Air Assaults," pp. 116-117.

Urtaev, "Battalion in an Air Assault," pp. 20-25.

Zhitarenko, "Combat Study," p. 1.

30 Belov, Ibid., p. 23.

31 Chernyshov, "A Tactical Airborne Landing," p. 27.

32 Combined Arms Combat Development Activity, Organization and Equipment of the Soviet Army, (Fort Leavenworth, 1980), p. 1-4. In the course of researching this paper, the only specific references to the number of helicopters needed to lift specific units were in Zaytsev and Naumov, "ATGM Battery," p. 77, and Zaytsev, "Mortar Battery," p. 94. These articles listed one MI-8 utility helicopter and four MI-6 transport helicopters for an ATGM battery, and one MI-8 and six MI-6's for a mortar battery. With this little specific data, it is impossible to determine exactly what size unit or number of helicopters would be needed to lift a reinforced MR Bn. However, it does seem to indicate that one MI-6 is needed for each combat vehicle. This may mean that, even using a full helicopter regiment, some of the fighting vehicles of the battalion may have to be left behind, thus significantly reducing the unit's fire power and maneuverability.

33 Subbotin, "Air Defence," p. 23.

34 Belov, "Helicopters and Land Force Tactics," p. 23.

35 Belov, "How to Fight Helicopters," Soviet Military Review, September 1979, p. 18.

³⁶ V. Sinoshenko, Guards LTC and Fomichev, Guards Sr. Lt., "When Helicopters Attack a Landing," Voyennyy Vestnik, October 1978, p. 44.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Belov, "How to Fight Helicopters," p. 18.

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